

Where is the Spacecraft?

DLN: The capsule came back to Earth and now the spacecraft as well? What's the spacecraft doing?

KG: *That's a good question. The spacecraft, in its design- it's not designed to lift off and land and lift off and land. The main spacecraft is still orbiting in space, and then just this part here, we folded up the collector, closed the capsule, and this capsule was released and dropped to Earth with a parachute, landed in Utah, and that was the end of the first Stardust mission. The capsule is actually now in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. The samples are in Houston at the Johnson Space Center. This grid is full of comet samples, and even though the mission's over, they have particles to analyze for years and years so the study of what we brought back is going to continue on.*

DLN: That's what we were talking about before, the process of scientific inquiry, and how students are used to seeing this as kind of a locked step- I start here, and I end here. But in this one, there are lots of mini cycles of inquiry and then people come in at certain parts- like come in just to do the analysis of the particles. A lot of cool stuff there.